

Israeli strikes kill 7 civilians in Lebanon as war spreads throughout the Middle East

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Israeli strikes on Lebanon killed eight people, including seven civilians Monday as the genocide in Gaza continues to metastasize into a regional war throughout the Middle East.

The strike was the largest single-day death toll in Lebanon since the beginning of Israel's assault on Gaza. Since October 7, Israeli forces have killed more than 200 people inside of Lebanon.

On Wednesday evening, an Israeli strike killed four civilians, including two women, from the same family in a residential building in the city of Nabatiyeh.

"The residents of the apartment targeted have no links to Hezbollah," a source told AFP.

In an earlier strike, Israeli forces targeted a house in the city of Sawwaneh, killing three members of a family, including children ages two and 13. Earlier in the day, a missile strike from Lebanon killed an Israeli soldier, Sgt. Omer Sarah Benjo, at a base in northern Israel.

Lebanon's National News Agency said the strikes "caused major damage to commercial establishments, shops, homes, and cars."

Herzi Halevi, chief of staff of the Israel Defense Forces, threatened a further expansion of war with Lebanon.

"We are now focused on being ready for war in the north," he said. "We are intensifying the strikes all the time, and Hezbollah is paying an increasingly heavy price. The next campaign will have a very strong offensive, and we will use all of our tools and capabilities."

Israeli war cabinet minister Benny Gantz reiterated these statements, declaring, "We must be clear: Those responsible for the shooting from Lebanon are not only Hezbollah ... but also the government of Lebanon and the Lebanese state that allows the shooting to occur

from its territory." He concluded, "There is no target or military infrastructure in the northern part of the country that is not in our sights," he said.

In a press briefing on Wednesday, US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan effectively endorsed Israel's strikes, stating that the US is seeking to ensure "an outcome in which Israel's security is guaranteed and their people can return to their homes." He condemned the "terror threat from Hezbollah," which "has moved closer and closer to the border."

The escalation came as Israeli officials made it clear they would not resume negotiations over a temporary ceasefire in Gaza, with the office of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu declaring that he "insists that Israel will not give in to Hamas's delusional demands."

Airstrikes continued in Rafah, the southernmost city in the Gaza Strip, where over 1 million displaced people are sheltering, as Israeli forces prepared to launch an imminent ground offensive.

Between February 13 and 14, 103 Palestinians were killed, bringing the official death toll to 28,576 Palestinians killed in Gaza—not including the thousands still missing and presumed dead.

The Israeli military has ordered the evacuation of Nasser Medical Complex in Khan Younis, the last major hospital in southern Gaza, where hundreds of medical workers, patients, and refugees have been under siege.

In a statement, World Health Organization Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said, "I am alarmed by what is reportedly happening at Nasser Medical Complex in #Gaza after being under siege for around a week. Hostilities have reportedly destroyed storage facilities for medical equipment and supplies. Access to the hospital remains obstructed—there is no

safe corridor for those in need.”

He added, “Two @WHO missions have been denied in the last four days, and we lost touch with the hospital’s personnel. We have seen before how depriving hospitals of resources and access halts lifesaving services. Nasser is the backbone of the health system in southern Gaza. It must be protected. Humanitarian access must be allowed. Hospitals must be safeguarded so that they can serve their life-saving function.”

In a briefing, Dr. Ashraf al-Qudra, the Gaza Health Ministry spokesperson, said that more than 1,500 displaced people are still inside the hospital, alongside 190 staff and 273 patients who cannot move. The hospital is running out of food, power and other essential supplies after having been under siege for weeks.

In a statement on Wednesday, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed to launch a ground offensive against Rafah. “We will fight until complete victory, and this includes a powerful action also in Rafah,” Netanyahu said.

In a press briefing Wednesday at the White House, National Security Advisor Sullivan admitted that Israel was not allowing food aid into Gaza despite having promised to do so.

Despite this, he restated that the goal of the United States is that “ Hamas is ultimately defeated,” again endorsing the open-ended US support for Israel’s genocide.

On Monday, US National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby was asked whether the United States will reduce its military aid to Israel if it assaults Rafah without taking into consideration “what happens to civilians.”

To this, Kirby replied, “We will continue to support Israel. They have a right to defend themselves against Hamas, and we will continue to make sure they have the tools and capabilities to do that.”

To drive this point home, *Politico* reported on Tuesday, based on statements by three US officials, “The Biden administration is not planning to punish Israel if it launches a military campaign in Rafah without ensuring civilian safety.” The report continued, “No reprimand plans are in the works, meaning Israeli forces could enter the city and harm civilians without facing American consequences.”

In a statement Wednesday, the Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention warned, “the Biden Administration is complicit in genocide and must take immediate steps to prevent further destruction, loss of life, and displacement in Gaza and the West Bank.” It concluded, “None of the Biden Administration’s tactics to deny genocide and avoid accountability will withstand the test of time. President Biden and key administration officials are on a path to be remembered as the principal enablers of one of the worst genocides in the 21st century.”



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